



HUMAN RESOURCES AND BENEFITS

300 LAKESIDE DRIVE, 5<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612-3556

**BENEFITS MEMORANDUM**

INFORMATION ITEM

**Priority: Normal**

**DATE:** September 25, 2003

**TO:** Benefits Managers, Academic Personnel Coordinators & Others

**FROM:** Mark Esteban, Director--Health & Welfare Policy & Program Design

**SUBJECT:** Health & Welfare Benefits Bridge for Non-Senate Faculty

**SUMMARY:** The purpose of this memo is to announce a recently negotiated provision for continuing health & welfare benefits applicable to employees in Unit 18, called the "Benefits Bridge".

**KEY WORDS:** Benefits Bridge; Unit 18 NSF

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September 25, 2003

TO: BENEFITS MANAGERS, ACADEMIC PERSONNEL COORDINATORS & OTHERS

RE: **Unit 18 Benefits Bridge for Continuing Health & Welfare Benefits**

You may know that negotiations were recently concluded on a new labor contract for Non-Senate Faculty (NSF). Ratification by Unit 18 – American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and approval by UC was secured June 30, 2003. Several benefit enhancements were included in the agreement for this group relating to both the UC Retirement Plan (UCRP) and health & welfare benefits. This memo will provide you with information related to a “Benefits Bridge” provision for continuing health & welfare benefits which was agreed upon by UC and AFT.

Additional changes related to UCRP (e.g., expanded UCRP eligibility and a Special Service Credit Allocation Program) are effective January 1, 2004. Information on these changes is currently being finalized and will be sent to you separately.

#### What is the Benefits Bridge?

The Benefits Bridge is a provision allowing NSF the option to continue their health & welfare benefits for up to three consecutive months during a break following an academic quarter/semester provided there is a written commitment for reemployment following the break. The Benefits Bridge provides NSF with an option similar to the one available to employees on approved leave of absence without pay. While not technically a “leave without pay”, Group Insurance Regulations applicable to an approved leave without pay will apply during the Benefits Bridge Period with certain differences described below.

#### When is the Benefits Bridge effective?

The Benefits Bridge provision becomes effective September 29, 2003 (90 days after ratification of the agreement). Given the academic year calendar, the first time the Benefits Bridge will become available for eligible NSF members will be **after the end of the 2003 fall quarter/semester**.

#### What Health & Welfare Benefits may be continued?

During the Benefits Bridge Period, eligible NSF employees may continue their coverage for the same health & welfare plans that an employee on an approved leave without pay may continue, listed as follows:

Medical  
Dental  
Vision  
Legal Expense  
AD&D  
Supplemental Life  
Basic Dependent Life  
Expanded Dependent Life

Coverage for Basic Life continues automatically during the Benefits Bridge Period. Coverage for the following benefits stops on the NSF's last day actively at work before the Benefits Bridge Period begins:

Short-Term Disability  
Supplemental Disability  
Business Travel Accident  
Workers' Compensation

#### Who is eligible?

UC employees who are NSF members of Unit 18 are eligible provided they satisfy the following requirements:

1. The NSF is enrolled in the University Group Insurance Health & Welfare Plan he/she wishes to continue on the last day prior to the commencement of the Benefits Bridge Period;
2. The NSF has a **written commitment for reemployment** in the Unit 18 bargaining unit at the end of the Benefits Bridge Period;
3. The NSF pays the required group plan premium(s) (both the employee and UC portions) for each plan he/she wishes to continue;
4. The NSF pays the required group plan premium(s) in advance each month, directly to the local Benefits or Payroll Office by their established due date;
5. An NSF is allowed to start only one Benefits Bridge in any twelve month period. For example, if an NSF member starts a three-month Benefits Bridge Period in July 2004, he/she would not be eligible to start a new Benefits Bridge Period until July 2005.
6. The standard benefits eligibility rules shall apply during the Benefits Bridge Period. While the Benefits Bridge Period is not considered a leave of absence without pay per se, Group Insurance Regulations applicable to an approved leave without pay will apply during the Benefits Bridge Period. However, the Benefits Bridge is not an eligible period for UCRP service credit buy-back.

Revisions to the Group Insurance Regulations planned for 2004 related to the Benefits Bridge as well as other changes, will be distributed separately.

How will the Benefits Bridge be administered?

1. The NSF must complete form UPAY 573 "Sabbatical Leave/Leave of Absence". This form has been updated to include a new leave type for the NSF Benefits Bridge. All old versions of the form should be recycled.
2. A letter showing the University's commitment to the employee's reemployment should be attached to this form and submitted to the employee's department for processing. If the NSF is eligible, requests to access the Benefits Bridge may not be denied.
3. Your location's direct pay premium processes applicable to a leave without pay will apply to the NSF Benefits Bridge.
4. Upon return to work after a Benefits Bridge Period, employees have a PIE to reenroll in any health & welfare coverage they were eligible to continue but did not. Reenrollment is not necessary for coverage continued during the Benefits Bridge Period. Other rules applicable to a return from a leave without pay apply to a return from a Benefits Bridge Period.

A special leave code, Leave of Absence Reason Code '18', has been established in the Personnel/Payroll System (PPS) to signify the Benefits Bridge Period and distinguish it from other types of leaves. PPS Release 1512, dated August 28, 2003 has been provided to campuses to establish the new Leave of Absence Reason Code in PPS. Information on this release is available at: <http://www.ucop.edu/payroll/REL2003/R1512/>.

If you should have any questions regarding the Unit 18 – AFT labor agreement, please contact your local Labor Relations office. Questions concerning the Health & Welfare Benefits Bridge should be directed to Kris Lange in UCOP Health & Welfare Administration at (510) 987-9051.

Sincerely,



Mark Esteban  
Director  
Health & Welfare Policy & Program Design  
Human Resources and Benefits  
Policy and Program Design

cc: Vice President Broome  
Associate Vice President Boyette  
Acting Associate Vice President Hafner  
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Assistant Editor Yalung